

**GOSPEL**
*Matthew 22:34-40*

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

**REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS**
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Today's Gospel speaks to us about the greatest of the commandments (cf. Mt 22:34-40). A doctor of the law questions Jesus about this and He responds with the "great commandment of love": "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "your neighbour as yourself" (vv. 37, 39). Love of God and neighbour are inseparable from each other. Let us pause a bit to reflect on this.

The first one, the fact that love for the Lord comes first, reminds us that God always precedes us, he anticipates us with his infinite tenderness (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), with his closeness, with his mercy, for he is always near, tender and merciful. Babies learn to love on their mother's and father's knees, and we do so in God's arms. The Psalm says, "Like a weaned child in their mother's arms" (cf. 131:2). This is how we should feel in God's arms. And there, we absorb the Lord's affection. There, we encounter the love that impels us to give ourselves generously. Saint Paul recalls this when he says that Christ's charity possesses a power that propels toward loving (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). And everything originates in him. You cannot truly love others if you do not have this root, which is God's love, Jesus' love.

And now the second aspect that emerges from the commandment of love. It connects love of God to love of neighbour: it means that by loving our brothers and sisters, we reflect the Father's love like mirrors. To reflect God's love, this is the point — to love he whom we do not see through the brother/sister we do see (cf. 1 Jn 4:20). One day, Saint Teresa

of Calcutta replied to a journalist who had asked her if she had illusions about changing the world through what she was doing: "I never thought I could change the world! I only wanted to be a drop of clean water, through which God's love could shine" (Meeting with journalists after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Rome, 1979). This is how she, who was so little, was able to do so much good — by reflecting God's love like a drop [of water]. And if while looking at her and other saints, we might sometimes be tempted to think that they are inimitable heroes, let us think again about this small drop: love is a drop that can change many things. And how can this be done? Taking the first step, always. Sometimes it is not easy to take the first step, to forget things..., to take the first step. Let's do that! This is the drop: to take the first step.

So, dear brothers and sisters, thinking about God's love that always precedes us, we can ask ourselves: Am I grateful to the Lord, who loves me first? Do I feel God's love and am I grateful to him? And do I try to reflect his love? Do I strive to love my brothers and sisters, to take this second step?

May the Virgin Mary help us live the great commandment of love in our daily life: to love and to allow God to love us, and to love our brothers and sisters.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



**Head:** Jesus links love of God and love of neighbour so closely that they cannot be separated. Why do you think these two commandments belong together?



**Heart:** How aware are you of being loved by God? How does that shape the way you treat the people around you?



**Hands:** St Teresa of Calcutta described herself as “a drop of clean water through which God’s love could shine.” What is one simple way you can reflect God's love to someone this week?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.